

I would like to pursue an academic career in quantitative psychology with a methodological focus on longitudinal design and a substantive focus on personality predictors of long term outcomes. My interests in contributing to the fields of quantitative and personality psychology will be best served by pursuing a doctoral degree in quantitative psychological sciences at Vanderbilt University.

My passion for quantitative psychology arose from my interest in the cold war domestic front and my aptitude for mathematics. I am fascinated by the irreconcilable images of the 1950s family and the housewife's role within it. The June Clever housewife, bedecked in pearls and fulfilled by her housework, and the Betty Friedan housewife, bound to her kitchen and destined to serve her family without a purpose of her own, couldn't describe the same experience. Which image captures her true experience?

I enrolled in a course that addressed that question. Our readings presented evidence for both sides; however, May's *Homeward Bound* (2008) approached the debate with a psychological study. May (2008) used a longitudinal study on personality and marriage to explore the early cold war domestic experience (Kelly, 1955). She theorized that home life was dominated by a culture of "domestic containment," where cold war anxiety drove individuals to endorse traditional gender roles and to ostracize anyone that didn't conform.

May's domestic containment theory resembles terror management theory. Faced with constant threat of death (*e.g.*, nuclear annihilation), individuals relieve this death-induced anxiety by shifting their foci away from their lives and onto their cultural legacy (*e.g.*, capitalist America). By interpreting the 1950s through that lens, bouts of social hysteria, such as the homophobic Lavender Scare, seem comprehensible.

May's historical approach focused on free responses and anecdotal outliers rather than on empirical evidence. In my experience, historians tend to approach datasets in this qualitative manner. (There are exceptions to this sweeping generalization. See Meyerowitz, 1994, or Simonton, 1990). I strongly believe that a quantitative approach can add a fresh perspective to the marriage debate.

Under Prof. Strube's guidance, my honors thesis will address predictors of marital satisfaction from the Kelly longitudinal study (KLS). In my preliminary work, the only gender difference in marital satisfaction I found was that wives were less satisfied with their marriages in terms of things expected from it ( $p = .04$ ). I will be predicting marital satisfaction as a function of prenuptial marital expectations in a three level multilevel model. I suspect that greater expectation discrepancies will predict lower levels of marital satisfaction.

In addition to my thesis research, I have considerable experience in quantitative lab work. I'm the lab coordinator for the social behavior lab. In Prof. Strube's lab, I have worked on numerous studies, including his self-esteem dynamics longitudinal study. Participants fill out a baseline report on various personality, values, and self-esteem measures. It has a two-by-two-by-two factorial design; participants are randomly assigned to one of eight conditions. During the baseline report, half of the participants predict their self-esteem at various points within the study. Participants fill out measures on their self-esteem daily or every other day for 14 sessions. On the 15th session, half of the participants recall their self-esteem from various points within the study.

Since August, I have worked in the personality measurement and development lab under the guidance of Prof. Jackson. We are pursuing other research projects from the KLS. The Murray Research Archives recently granted us full access to the KLS original data at the individual item level and the data with the Conley follow-up. Over the winter holiday, I will fly out to Harvard University to ensure that the data is properly prepared for coding. For our initial project, we will predict health outcomes as a function of personality, controlling for family history. Because

this data set is such a rich resource and should lead to numerous substantive publications, Prof. Jackson and I intend to continue collaborating after I graduate.

Although my work with the KLS has been inspired by a historical question, I believe that it is still relevant to present psychological research. Marriage is still a union of two people; the historic context doesn't change that these people have goals, expectations, and personality. Archival data can answer modern questions and inspire new lines of longitudinal research.

I've grown more interested in longitudinal design and personality predictors of long term outcomes. While in graduate school, I would like to pursue the following two projects: 1) I would like to explore the relationship between conscientiousness, neuroticism, and life expectancy from the KLS, and 2) I would like to run my own longitudinal study of homosexual marital satisfaction. Given that same-sex marriage has been recognized in nine jurisdictions and no study has explicitly addressed predictors of same-sex marital satisfaction, I believe that this study could be incredibly fruitful. I anticipate running this study online, with funding from any number of non-profit advocacy groups.

I believe that I can flourish under the guidance of Prof. Rodgers, who has done very interesting work on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. I am especially excited that the study has items on "dating and relationships" and "relationship and fertility history." I also believe that I could flourish under the guidance of Prof. Lubinski, whose work on the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth is of great interest to me. I am especially intrigued with his findings on the lack of large gender differences within the sample (Lubinski & Benbow, 2006). I would love to contribute to Vanderbilt's rising program in quantitative methods. Furthermore, my scheduled visit to campus reaffirmed that I could see myself happily enrolled in your program.